DMZ

#1 – “On The Ground”

Prepared for Will Dennis and Vertigo

Page 1 – Brian draws

Panel 1

Wide, horizontal map of the warzone, graphically similar to imagery seen on newscasts. Manhattan is centered in the space, with a little of Jersey and Brooklyn and Queens. Military iconography indicates army placements, troop movements, and other special elements.

Voiceover of a newscaster:

“…TODAY MARKS THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INITIAL OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE SO-CALLED “FREE STATES”. IT IS ALSO THE THIRD DAY OF A TENTATIVE CEASEFIRE, AND FROM THIS SIDE OF THE LINE, IT APPEARS TO BE HOLDING.”

“BUT FOR HOW LONG, EXACTLY, REMAINS TO BE SEEN. FREE ARMY SOLDIERS HAVE A WELL-DESERVED REPUTATION FOR BEING INDISCRIMINATE AND UNCIVILIZED WHEN IT COMES TO WARFARE IN CIVILIAN AREAS.   THE WHITE HOUSE HAS BRANDED FREE ARMY SOLDIERS AS “THUGS AND MURDERS”, A LABEL FIRMLY REJECTED BY THE OPPOSITION. BUT IN A WARZONE, ACTIONS DO SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.”

Panel 2

Cut to a still image of a Manhattan street, the Lower East Side, strewn with rubble and a bombed out car, presumably taken minutes after a car bomb. A couple bodies are laying in the street and two heavily armored and equipped US soliders stand nearby.

“MILITARY COMMANDERS HAVE EXPRESSED FAITH IN THIS MOST RECENT CEASEFIRE, BROKERED BY THE QUEBECOIS, OVERSEEN BY U.N. PEACEKEEPERS. ‘IT HAS ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A LASTING DEAL,’ GENERAL MUELLER SAID ‘BUT ONLY ON PAPER. THE “FREE STATE” FORCES

NEED TO PROVE TO THE WORLD THEY'RE FINALLY SERIOUS THIS TIME, IF IN FACT, THEY ARE. I, FOR ONE, AM NOT HOLDING MY BREATH.'

"FOR THE FEW REMAINING RESIDENTS OF THE BELEAGURED ISLAND OF MANHATTAN, A FORMAL CEASEFIRE IS OF LITTLE CONSOLATION WHEN FACED WITH THE REALTIES OF THE WAR ZONE THEY LIVE IN: LOOTERS, ROVING GANGS OF UNSTABLE NEIGHBORHOOD MILITIA, INSURGENTS, SUICIDE BOMBERS, STREETSIDE I.E.D.'s, CONTRACT KILLERS… THIS IS DAILY LIFE IN THE CITY.

Page 2 – *Brian draws*

Panel 1

Small image of a bearded man hunkered down in a bombed out building somewhere, taking cover from fire, shouting into a cellphone, reading from a small notebook. A war reporter. Text along the bottom of the image reads AP FILE PHOTO.

"NOBEL PRIZE WINNING NEWS JOURNALIST VIKTOR FERGUSON IS EN ROUTE AS WE SPEAK TO AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN BROOKLYN WHERE HE'LL BOARD A MILITARY HELICOPTER AND FLY INTO, YES, YOU HEARD ME, **INTO** MANHATTAN FOR A SERIES OF NEWS STORIES HIGHLIGHTING WHAT ITS REALLY LIKE FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN THE D.M.Z.

Small image of a Blackhawk helicopter sitting atop a building somewhere.

"LIBERTY NEWS SPOKESWOMAN MARYBETH SPAULDING HAD THIS TO SAY: 'THIS IS HISTORY IN THE MAKING. NEVER BEFORE HAS ANY NEWS ORGANIZATION HAD SUCH ACCESS TO MANHATTAN. CIVILIAN LIFE OVER THERE REMAINS LARGELY A MYSTERY, A MYSTERY THAT VIKTOR FERGUSON INTENDS TO UNRAVEL FOR YOU, THE VIEWERS AT HOME.

Large panel, still photograph of the Jersey coastline as seen from the west side of Manhattan.

"'IN RESPONSE TO SAFETY CONCERNS, THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IF THE CEASEFIRE HOLDS, AS ALL PARTIES PLEDGE IT WILL, THEY SHOULD BE PERFECTLY SAFE WITH THE MILITARY BODYGUARDS ATTACHED. MR. FERGUSON WILL BROADCAST, LIVE, TWICE DAILY ON THIS STATION, FOR A TOTAL OF FIVE DAYS STARTING TOMORROW EVENING.

"TUNE IN THEN, FOR WHAT WILL BE, WE'RE SURE, UNFORGETTABLE TELEVISION."

Final panel of a news graphic, a stark American flag and the LNS logo.

"THIS IS THE LIBERTY NEWS SERVICE, BROADCASTING FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK."

Page 3 – *Riccardo draws from here onwards*

Panel 1

Matty is sitting in a metal folding chair, his back against the wall, in a very institutional-looking corridor, like in a hospital or even a prison. Cement walls painted a grubby off-white, tile floor, long exposed fluorescent lights overhead. Feels like it might be in a maintenance area.

Matty is alone, sitting in this chair, in an otherwise empty hallway. He's been waiting, and is a little bored. He's rocking back on the back legs on the chair. He has headphones on. Next to his chair, on the floor, is his rucksack, packed full, and his parka. Matty's dressed in army pants, skate sneakers, and a t-shirt.

We are looking at him straight on, from across the hall.

Panel 2

Reverse the shot so we see what he's looking at across the hall. It's the opposite wall, and dead center is a piece of paper taped up with evacuation instructions. Looks like something that was just run off on an office laser printer. It reads:

ATTENTION

IN THE EVENT OF MISSILE, MORTAR ATTACK, OR AIRSTRIKE, PLS PROCEED DIRECTLY TO THE DESIGNATED SECURITY AREA AND AWAIT FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

Bellow this, in ballpoint pen, is a crude arrow pointing left, supposedly in the direction of the "designated security area"

On the wall around this sheet of paper is just a mess of graffiti on the walls. Not large spray painted tags, but small stuff that people scratched into the paint or wrote with a pencil. Mostly names, swear works, crude cartoon drawings of dicks and naked ladies, phone numbers, etc. What you would see in a bathroom in a dive bar.

Panel 3

Small panel of Matty’s face, close-up, as he studies the wall.

Panel 4

Small panel zoomed in on a single phrase, written carefully and deliberately on the wall in small block letters, almost like a warning: EVERY DAY IS 9/11

Page 4

Panel 1

Matty sits forward, pulling his headphones off, looking in one direction down the hall.

Panel 2

A few dozen yards down the hall, a mass of people are approaching in a hurry. The main figure leading the pack is our veteran journalist, a large man in his late fifties, but still in very good shape. Visually, imagine Sean Connery at that age, with a stern arrogance that comes with an incredibly successful career and massive ego. He’s dressed in army pants, a sweater and a photo-journalist’s vest. No bags. Walking like he owns the place.

With him, struggling to keep up, is a pack of functionaries and hangers-on, a pretty woman in a business suit and clipboard, trying to run down a checklist, a few executive types, bland men in suits, and behind them a gaggle of photographers trying to snap pictures.

This should be a large panel, the largest on the page, heightening the importance placed on the journalist and his entourage, as well as the importance of this mission.

Panel 3

The group brushes past Matty, who is on his feet, headphones around his neck, rucksack and parka in hand.

No one is paying him any attention to him, except for the woman with the clipboard, who calls out to him as the group hustles past.

WOMAN: ARE YOU MATTHEW ROTH?

MATTY: YEAH – I'M HERE FOR THE PHOTO TECH INTERNSHIP?

Panel 4

The group has moved past him. The woman's voice floats above the group.

WOMAN: FOLLOW US! **MOVE!**

Panel 5

Matty is running after them, his parka on and rucksack over one shoulder.

MATTY: YO, WHAT'S THE RUSH?

Page 5

Panel 1

We're outside now, on a very large rooftop helipad. It's nighttime, but the roof is flooded with lights. A very large military helicopter sits, powered up and rotors spinning. Around the edges of the roof are anti-aircraft machine gun emplacements, and Patriot missile batteries. Soldiers in full battle gear with weapons are standing at attention all around.

The building is pretty tall, about 15 stories, and is the distance we can see smoke coming from a dozen fires, and a few other skyscrapers lit up.

DISPLAY LETT: LONG ISLAND CITY, QUEENS.
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

This is a large panel – we need to get the whole scene in one shot, the military presence, the city around them, the fire and smoke, the state of readiness, and the lethal looking helicopter.

Panel 2

In the close foreground of all of this Matty is standing there, looking bewildered, with the clipboard woman next to him.

MATTY: UH, YOU SURE I'M IN THE RIGHT PLACE?

MATTY: I SORTA ASSUMED I'D BE IN A LAB OR A **CUBICLE** OR SOMETHING…

The woman is scanning her clipboard.

WOMAN: YEP. MATTHEW ROTH. YOU'RE ON BOARD WITH MR. FERGUSON.

Panel 3

Matty pointing at the copter.

MATTY: ON BOARD? ***THAT?***

MATTY: I'M GOING TO MANHATTAN? YOU **SERIOUS**?

Panel 4

The woman hands him her clipboard, which has sheets of legal looking documents clipped to it, as well as his ID card, a laminated thing with his photo and the word PRESS in large bold letters.

WOMAN: HERE YOU GO. THIS IS YOUR PRESS PASS. HAVE THIS WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES. WITH A LITTLE LUCK IT'LL KEEP YOU ALIVE.

WOMAN: AND SIGN AT THE BOTTOM. YOU'LL BE BONDED FOR THE DURATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT, AND WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY AND ALL PHOTO EQUIPMENT ENTRUSTED TO YOUR CARE.

Panel 5

Matty's holding the clipboard, signing like he was told.

MATTY: HOLY SHIT.

WOMAN, off panel: KID, SHIT LIKE THIS COMES ALONG ONCE IN A **LIFETIME**.

WOMAN, off panel: BRING ME BACK A SOUVENIR, WOULD YA?

Page 6

Panel 1

Inside the copter now. Matty's strapping into one of the rear seats. The interior is similar to a minivan, with two seats upfront for the pilot and the journalist, and then three rows of two seats each in back – total of six. In addition to Matty are four military men, bodyguards, and one tech support guy.

Right next to Matty is a huge but friendly looking soldier in full battle gear, all matte black. He's handing Matty a set of headphones with lip microphone attached. He has to yell over the noise of the copter.

SOLDIER: **PUT THIS ON!**

Panel 2

The journalist turns around and addresses Matty, who has the headphones on now.

FERGUSON: MATT ROTH?

MATTY, off panel: YES SIR. MATTY ALSO WORKS.

Panel 3

The journalist faces front, but keeps speaking to Matty via the headset and mike.

FERGUSON: COUPLE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW.

FERGUSON: ONE: YOU WEREN'T MY FIRST CHOICE. I HAVE REAL PHOTO TECHS ON STAFF I'VE WORKED WITH BEFORE. YOU'RE ONLY HERE BECAUSE YOUR DAD PULLED SOME STRINGS.

FERGUSON: TWO: I'M THE BOSS. YOU EXIST TO EXECUTE MY ORDERS AND TO BE HANDY AT ALL TIMES, NO MATTER WHAT. DON'T TRY TO MAKE CONVERSATION, BE MY FRIEND, WHATEVER. UNDERSTAND?

Panel 4

Cut back to Matthew who looks really pissed off.

MATTY: UH, YES ***SIR!***

MATTY: prick.

Next to him, the soldier is leaning over and talking to him closely, his gloved hand wrapped around his microphone so no one else can hear him.

SOLDIER: DUDE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT -- THIS IS JUST WHO HE IS. IT'S THE PULITZERS TALKING. DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. FUCK HIM.

SOLDIER: DID THEY TELL YOU ANYTHING BEFORE WE LEFT?

Panel 5

Matty responds, his hand also wrapped around his microphone.

MATTY: NOT REALLY, WHY?

SOLDIER: LISTEN -- STICK CLOSE TO ME. MANHATTAN'S A **FUCKED UP PLACE** – IT'S A NO-MAN'S-LAND. KIND OF PLACE YOU NEED TO KEEP ONE EYE LOOKING **UP** ALWAYS, YA KNOW?

SOLDIER: THERE'S ALSO ZERO FUCKIN' SECURITY IN THE CITY, EXCEPT WHAT THE LOCALS SET UP ON THEIR OWN. THE "RULES" CHANGE FROM BLOCK TO BLOCK, NEIGHBORHOOD TO NEIGHBORHOOD. DON'T ASSUME **NOTHING**.

Panel 6

Exterior shot of the helicopter flying a few feet over the surface of the East River, lights off, just a black shape in the night.

SOLDIER: EVERYTHING YOU HEAR IS TRUE, ALL THOSE RUMORS AND URBAN MYTHS ABOUT THE ENEMY, ITS **ALL TRUE.**

Page 7

Panel 1

The helicopter's reached the edge of Manhattan, coming in low over the FDR highway near the Brooklyn Bridge.

From inside, the pilots voice comes over the headphones.

PILOT: COMING UP ON THE DROP ZONE, PEOPLE. THIRTY SECONDS.

Panel 2

It flashes overhead, as a heavily camouflaged and dug-in man looks up at it. He's a sniper, guarding this side of the river. His face is painted with black paint, and his clothes look like salvaged military gear from a half dozen different wars.

As he looks up at the passing copter, he's talking to someone on a cellphone, a hands-free setup like you see business people with, a single earphone bud and a wire hanging down the side of their face.

DISPLAY LETT: THE LOWER EAST SIDE, MANHATTAN.

Panel 3

Matty looks really nervous. The soldier keeps talking to him, getting really serious and intense now.

SOLDIER: WHATEVER THEY WANNA CALL 'EM: KILLERS, REDNECKS, NECKERS, FUCKIN' DIRTBAGS, COMMIES, OSAMA-LOVERS, DOMESTICS, TIMMIES, JINGOES, FLYOVERS, OR EVEN JUST "THOSE JERSEY MOTHERFUCKERS"… IT DON'T MATTER.

SOLDIER: THEY'RE JUST THE **PIECES OF SHIT** RESPONSIBLE FOR TURNING THIS COUNTRY INTO A FUCKIN' **JOKE**, A REAMED-OUT HOLE IN THE DIRT. KEEP THAT IN MIND, MAN. SERIOUSLY.

Panel 4

Birds-eye view of the city below the helicopter, a grid of darkened buildings, interrupted by the occasional bonfire or burned out vehicle serving as a roadblock.

SOLDIER, from off: FUNNY THING IS, I GREW UP AROUND HERE. THE ARMY RECRUITMENT OFFICE IS JUST A FEW BLOCKS DOWN THAT WAY. OR WAS. I USED TO PASS IT EVERY DAY COMING HOME FROM CLASS, THE FUCKERS.

Panel 5

The helicopter flares over an intersection, a convergence several streets that forms a large triangular open area. No one appears to be around. The wash from the rotors kicks up a lot of dirt. About 20-25 feet above the street.

Soldier are beginning to rope down from the copter, in advance of the rest of the passengers, to establish security

SOLDIER: FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN MY BLOCK IN FIVE YEARS. **FUCK**, THAT'S DEPRESSING.

Panel 6

Back outside again, the squad of 4-5 soldiers fan out around the copter, weapons drawn and ready, forming a loose circle around the landing site. They are each facing towards the darkened buildings that surround the intersection.

The rotors of the helicopter are still turning. It's going to take back off again once everyone's offloaded.

Page 8

Panel 1

The soldier in command (the one who was talking to Matty), gets out and opens the co-pilot side door, the front seat passengers door for Mr. Ferguson.

Matty is stumbling out himself, trying to deal with several bags and equipment cases. The rotors are still kicking up a lot of dust. He's more towards the rear of the helicopter, pulling the equipment from a baggage area.

SOLDIER: HERE YOU GO, MR. FERGUSON.

SOLDIER: WATCH YOUR STEP.

Panel 2

Ferguson gets out, unafraid, as expected from a veteran of many warzones. He's shielding his eyes a bit.

FERGUSON: WE NEED TO SET UP QUICKLY – SPECIFICALLY COMMUNICATIONS. I NEED TO CHECK IN WITH MY OFFICE.

SOLDIER: YOU GOT IT, SIR.

Panel 3

Matty is still unloading cases. But something's caught his eye.

MATTY: WHAT--

Panel 4

He sees one of the perimeter soldier's heads explode in a puff of red spray. Shot by a sniper's bullet.

Panel 5

He turns to the next soldier a little ways away, who is also taking a bullet to the head. So calm, and quiet, and quickly. No one is noticing.

MATTY: I—

Panel 6

Matty turns and yells towards the Soldier and Ferguson.

MATTY: **MISTER FERGUSON! HEY! HEY!**

Panel 7

The solider turns in the direction of Matty, but he is hit in the head by a bullet before he can say or do anything.

Page 9

Panel 1

Matty ducks down behind a few of the aluminum crates and cases he's been unloading.

MATTY: SHIT! ***FUCK!***

Panel 2

From his POV, we see Ferguson climbing back into the helicopter.

MATTY: HEY! **NO! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?**

Panel 3

As an instinct, he gets up from his cover and starts to run towards the front of the copter, but we see bullets impact the pavement by his feet and he trips and falls.

Panel 4

Laying on the street, he watches helplessly as the copter takes off without him.

MATTY: NO, YOU FUCKING ASSHOLES! **COME BACK!**

Panel 5

Closer to the copter in his panel, we can see Ferguson looking back down at Matty, looking right at him, no emotion on his face. He's knowingly leaving Matty behind.

Page 10

Panel 1

More bullets hit the pavement right by Matty's face, sending chips and fragments right into his forehead.

MATTY: ***AHHHH!***

Panel 2

He gets to his feet and runs back to his safe haven surrounded by the equipment cases and bags. The intersection is empty now, he's right out in the open, but protected from immediate gunfire.

Panel 3

Closer to him now, he's wiping blood from his forehead with his sleeve. There's a lot of it now, running down in narrow streams around his eyes and nose.

MATTY: CHILL, MATTY, CHILL…

MATTY: THEY'LL BE BACK, THEY **GOTTA** COME BACK.

Panel 4

He is startled suddenly by a huge noise.

SFX" ***BOOOOMMM!***

Panel 5

He looks up at the copter, which is almost directly overhead still, trailing smoke and flames from its tail section.

Panel 6

While Matty watches, another RPG streaks out from an unknown source a few buildings down, a long streak of fire, and strikes the copter again, this time more near the front of it, the cockpit.

SFX: ***KA-BOOOOMMMM!***

Page 11

Panel 1

Cut back to Matty who is staring at this is disbelief.

MATTY: No...

Panel 2

The helicopter goes down behind a row of buildings, out of sight.

Panel 3

Matty pulls his rucksack onto his back and grabs to metal cases. These have shoulder straps and he carries one on each side.

MATTY: OK, BE COOL. IT'S JUST A COUPLE BLOCKS AWAY.

MATTY: YOU CAN MAKE IT.

Panel 4

He gets up suddenly and sprints to the sidewalk, as best he can carrying so much weight.

He makes it with no shots being fired at him.

Panel 5

He sprints down the sidewalk to the corner.

Panel 6

He crouches behind a battered and bullethole-ridden newspaper box. Pauses, catching his breath.

Its really dark, and he can't see much, just the shapes of buildings. Most intersections have makeshift roadblocks made from rusted hulks of vehicles, trash piled high, and other street items.

The running is making his forehead bleed more, but he isn't thinking about wiping it away.

Panel 7

He gets up and sprints across the street, without incident.

Page 12

Panel 1

He turns the corner, and there it is a half block away – the downed copter. It didn't explode on impact (although parts of it are still on fire). Crawling all over it are these men in gasmasks and fur hats, holding AK-47's. Presumably, these are the men who shot it down.

They're inspecting the fuselage, tugging at panels and handles, ripping out wiring, and otherwise trying to disassemble it.

We are looking over Matty's shoulder at this, as he stands on the corner, half-shielding himself from view behind the corner of the building, which, if you can show it, is a Chinese restaurant. The windows are boarded up, but the sign is intact.

Panel 2

One of the men raises his weapon and fires a steady burst right into the cockpit windows, definitely killing anyone inside.

Panel 3

Matty turns to one side and runs into a boarded up Chinese restaurant (that's missing a few slats).

MATTY: SHIT!

Panel 4

He squeezes in, pulling the equipment cases with him.

From behind him and off panel, a voice:

VOICE: **YO!** WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?

Page 13

Panel 1

Large panel of the Zee, except we can't see her too well – its dark and she has a bandanna wrapped around her face like a bandito from the Old West. She's advancing towards Matty warily with a matte black handgun, partially held together with duct tape.

ZEE: THIS IS **MY** PLACE! GET OUT!

Panel 2

Matty backs up in fear, sliding across the floor on his ass, hands up to protect himself.

MATTY: NO, PLEASE!

Panel 3

Then he passes out, partly out of fear but mostly from pain and exhaustion, probably. The back of his head hits the floor with an audible: THUD.

MATTY: …

Panel 4

The Zee tugs down her bandanna, confused herself at this turn of events. We get a good look at her face now – her youth and relative beauty a stark contrast to what we've seen of Manhattan so far, all freaks and violence and people in masks.

ZEE: HUH, WASN'T EXPECTING ***THAT*** TO HAPPEN.

ZEE: WHERE'D THIS KID COME FROM?

Page 14

Panel 1

Open with a wide angle on the interior of the Chinese restaurant we last saw Matty. All the tables and chairs are pushed up against one wall, and Matty is lying across a few of the tables, asleep. His rucksack on the floor underneath him. The equipment cases are nowhere to be seen.

Its morning, and sunlight is streaming into the room from the windows, through gaps in the boards. The room is cleaner than one would expect – despite being boarded up, its obviously being maintained and cleaned.

Panel 2

Move to a close-up on Matty's face as he starting waking up, squinting against the sunlight falling across his face. A large bandage, like a giant band-aid is stuck across his forehead where he was wounded.

Panel 3

Suddenly he sits up, wide awake and on guard.

Panel 4

Looks around, sees no one. Next to him on the table is a bowl of steaming tofu and noodles.

MATTY: WHAT THE HELL?

Panel 5

The Zee walks in the room, dressed in battered jeans and a t-shirt.

ZEE: OH GOOD, YOU'RE AWAKE.

ZEE: THAT WAS THE BIGGEST FAINT IN HISTORY, I THINK.

Panel 6

She hands him a cellphone, a large, somewhat clunky looking one, built bigger and more rugged for military use, presumably.

ZEE: FOUND THIS IN YOUR BAG. FUCKING THING KEEPS RINGING, KEPT ME UP HALF THE NIGHT UNTIL I FOUND THE ‘MUTE’ BUTTON.

ZEE: FIGURED I’D LET YOU KEEP THAT. STILL GOING THROUGH YOUR EQUIPMENT CASES. YOU GOT SOME COOL SHIT, MAN.

Page 15

Panel 1

Matty takes the phone. The Zee is already leaving the room.

MATTY: **HEY!**

MATTY: YOU CAN’T JUST TAKE MY STUFF! I’M RESPONSIBLE FOR IT.

ZEE: LOOK, IF I DIDN’T TAKE IT, THE FREAKS OUTSIDE LAST NIGHT WOULD’VE. CONSIDER IT PAYMENT FOR SERVICES RENDERED: ROOM AND BOARD.

ZEE: EAT YOUR BREAKFAST.

Panel 2

Close up on the cell as Matty flips it open and thumbs a button that says ‘M’.

Panel 3

It immediately rings, startling Matty,

SFX: ***BEEP BEEP BE-BEEP!***

Panel 4

He answers it.

MATTY: HELLO?

VOICE: *WHO IS THIS?*

MATTY: THIS IS MATT ROTH… WHO'S THIS?

Panel 5

Similar panel as previous. Matty is listening to people talking on the other end of the connection.

MATTY: HELLO?

VOICE: *HOW DID YOU GET THIS PHONE?*

MATTY: IT WAS IN THE BAG, IT JUST STARTED RINGING! LISTEN, ARE YOU WITH THE NETWORK?

Panel 7

There is silence on the other end. Matty waits a couple seconds.

MATTY: …

MATTY: I'M THE **INTERN**! YOU **HIRED** ME!

Panel 8

The voice replies.

VOICE: PUT SOMEONE ELSE ON. WHERE'S VIKTOR FERGUSON?

Matty is up and pacing around towards the windows. He's getting very agitated.

MATTY: HE'S DEAD! THE HELICOPTER WAS **SHOT DOWN** AND I THINK THEY **KILLED** HIM!

MATTY: I GOT HIT A LITTLE, BUT EVERYONE ELSE WAS SHOT. I SAW THE SECURITY GUYS--

VOICE: *HE DIED? MR. FERGUSON'S DEAD?*

Page 16

Panel 1

Again, the voice screeches.

VOICE: *WHO SHOT YOU DOWN? DID YOU SEE THEM? WHO WERE THEY?*

MATTY: NO – I MEAN, YES, BUT THEY WERE WEARING MASKS--

VOICE: ***THINK.*** *WHAT DIRECTION DID THE FIRE COME FROM? NORTH, WEST, WHAT? WAS IT SMALL ARMS FIRE? RPG? IS THE CRASH SITE SECURE?*

Panel 2

Matty is getting very confused and flustered by this barrage of questions he can't possible answer.

MATTY: SECURE? WHAT-- NO, I DON'T THINK SO. WHAT--

VOICE: *NO ONE'S PROTECTING THE CRASH SITE? WHAT ABOUT THE EQUIPMENT? WHAT ABOUT THE BODIES?*

MATTY: LISTEN TO ME! I DON'T **CARE** ABOUT EQUIPMENT OR ANYTHING! I'M NOT EVEN GETTING PAID FOR THIS!

Panel 3

Matty screams into the phone, finally hitting his breaking point.

MATTY: WILL YOU SEND SOMEONE TO PICK ME UP? **PLEASE?**

MATTY: I DON'T KNOW **WHERE** I AM, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. THIS FUCKING PHONE RANG AND I ANSWERED IT. THAT'S **ALL**.

VOICE: *MATTHEW—*

MATTY: JUST TELL ME WHAT TO DO. TELL ME HOW TO GET OUT OF HERE, OK?

Panel 4

The voice on the other end is calmer now.

VOICE: *MATTHEW, LISTEN TO ME. WE'RE GOING TO GET OUT OF THERE, WE'LL GET YOU HOME.*

VOICE: *DO YOU KNOW HOW TO GET TO THE EXTRACTION POINT FROM WHERE YOU ARE?*

MATTY: EXTRACTION POINT? WHAT – NO, I DON'T.

VOICE: *LISTEN, DELANCY AND BOWERY, OK? GET TO DELANCY AND BOWERY. IT'S ONLY A FEW BLOCKS, YOU CAN FIND IT.*

Panel 5

Pull back for this shot, get the whole room in, with Matty by the windows.

VOICE: *WE HAVE A RESCUE TEAM HEADING NOW TO SECURE THE CRASH SITE. THEY'LL PICK YOU UP. KEEP YOUR I.D. BADGE ON YOU. THAT'S YOUR TICKET OUT.*

MATTY: ALRIGHT.

VOICE: *WE'LL GET YOU HOME SAFE, NO PROBLEMS. BUT YOU NEED TO GET TO THE EXTRACTION POINT ON YOUR OWN.*

VOICE: *BE CAREFUL. THE CEASEFIRE IS PROBABLY BLOWN TO SHIT, SO YOU'RE NOW IN AN ACTIVE WAR ZONE. SO ANYONE YOU SEE, MATTHEW, CONSIDER A POTENTIAL HOSTILE.*

Panel 6

Close up on Matty's face for this last panel.

VOICE: *WE'LL SEE YOU BACK HERE IN JUST A LITTLE BIT, OK?*

VoICE: *GET TO THE EXTRACTION POINT **NOW.***

Page 17

Panel 1

Matty clicks the phone off and stands there for a moment, thinking, looking at it in his hand. He starts speaking to himself, under his breath

MATTY Ok, you can do this…

Panel 2-3

He quickly walks over to his bags, and pulls the rucksack on his shoulders.

MATTY: Bowery and Delancy…Bowery and Delancy…

MATTY: Ceasfire blow to shit, active war zone. Fuckin' ***perfect***.

MATTY: Why ***aren't*** I getting paid for this, anyway?

From off panel, the voice of the Zee.

VOICE: HEY, WHERE YOU GOING SO FAST?

Panel 4

He turns back, fearful. Everyone's his enemy, he remembers.

MATTY: LOOK, I GOTTA GO. CAN I HAVE MY STUFF BACK?

ZEE: WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

MATTY: I'M BEING PICKED UP. MY EMPLOYERS. I NEED TO BRING THOSE CASES BACK, OK?

Panel 5

She stands there, arms folded.

ZEE: TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

MATTY: WHAT? CORNER OF BOWERY AND DELANCY, WHEREVER THAT IS. WHAT DO YOU CARE?

Panel 6

She rests a hand on his shoulder.

ZEE: IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME, BUT YOU'RE NOT LOCAL, AND IF YOU PLAN ON STEPPING OUTSIDE EVEN A LITTLE BIT, YOU'RE GONNA NEED MY HELP TO NOT GET SHOT.

ZEE: YOU HAVE FIRST AID KITS IN ONE OF THOSE CASES AND A PARAMEDICS KIT, I NOTICED.

Panel 7

Matty, standing there helplessly, cuts a deal.

MATTY: THEY'RE YOURS. KEEP 'EM.

MATTY: CAN YOU HELP ME GET TO BOWERY AND DELANCY?

Page 18

Panel 1

Small vertical establishing panel of Matty and the Zee squeezing down a narrow alleyway, heading towards the street. She's carrying one of the equipment bags for him. He's carrying the other one, and his rucksack.

I say "establishing" in that we need to indicate the passage of time from the previous panel on the last page.

ZEE: THIS IS VERY MUCH A LOCALS-ONLY NEIGHBORHOOD – EVERYONE KNOWS EVERYONE. STAY CLOSE - IF YOU'RE WITH ME, YOU SHOULD BE COOL.

MATTY: WHY DID YOU JUST WANT THAT FIRST AID STUFF?

ZEE: I'M A MED STUDENT. USED TO BE, ANYWAY. I RUN A LITTLE CLINIC HERE.

Panel 2

They reach the street. Matty is right next to the Zee, shoulders brushing, as he takes in the scene in front of him.

It's bright and sunny out, and the image of the twisted helicopter wreck is black and stark in the sunshine. It's been full stripped of anything useful – scrap metal, the seats, the rotors – all that's left is the shell.

A group of ratty teenagers are inside it, tugging away at the instrument panel. These aren't the same people as last night. These are just local kids goofing around.

This should be the largest panel on the page, to really show all the scene elements properly.

MATTY: WOAH. WHAT'RE THEY DOING?

ZEE: PULLING OUT THE COMPUTERS. ONE OF 'EM WILL TAKE IT ACROSS THE HUDSON TO THE FREE ARMIES AND SELL IT AS INTEL, PROBABLY.

ZEE: OR JUST AS LIKELY SELL IT BACK TO AMERICAN TROOPS AT THE BRIDGE CHECKPOINT.

MATTY: THEY'D JUST HELP THE **ENEMY** LIKE THAT?

ZEE: WHO'S THE ENEMY?

ZEE: SIDES DON'T MEAN MUCH AROUND HERE.

Panel 3

Closer on them, their heads and shoulders. The Zee is pointing straight upwards with one hand.

MATTY: WHAT'D THEY DO WITH THE BODIES?

ZEE: YOU **REALLY** WANNA KNOW?

Panel 4

Matty looks behind him and up. Five corpses are hanging from the second floor fire escape, wrapped in sheets.

MATTY: …

ZEE: THE **ONE** PROBLEM WITH A LOCALS-ONLY 'HOOD. YOU CAN'T PICK WHO YOUR NEIGHBORS ARE. WE GOT A PRETTY **INTENSE** MILITIA.

Panel 5

Matty is digging into the equipment pack he's carrying. The Zee isn't noticing, as she's continuing with her thought.

ZEE: THEY DISPLAY THEM LIKE THAT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CRAZIES. "STAY OUT OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD", YA KNOW?

ZEE: I DON'T CONDONE SHIT LIKE THAT, JUST SO YOU KNOW. BUT I'M SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. I DON'T MAKE WAVES, THEY LET ME RUN MY CLINIC THE WAY I WANT.

Panel 6

Another girl walks by, another local, skinny Asian girl in a white dress and rubber boots and gloves. She's pointing at them.

ASIAN ZEE: YO, WHO'S THAT GUY? HE WITH YOU?

Panel 7

ZEE: YO, WHAT'S UP? YEAH, HE'S WITH ME, IT'S COOL, HE'S— **HEY!**

She turns to look at Matty, who has his camera out and is snapping pictures of the hanging corpses, completely without the Zee noticing.

MATTY: WHAT?

Page 19

Panel 1

She grabs the camera out of his hands with much violence.

ZEE: ARE YOU FUCKING **CRAZY**?

MATTY: WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Panel 2

She grabs him by the upper arm and starts walking him down the street. The streets are typically in poor repair, lots of craters and holes from bombings and mortar attacks, and makeshift roadblocks are set up at most intersections to prevent the movement of large vehicles. People get around on foot, on bicycles, and small scooters and mopeds. Most streets in neighborhoods are kept clean by the residents, so not much trash around. The storefronts and ground floor buildings are typically boarded up, but some are open selling boxes of scrap metal and random spare parts, and a few sell food. Those open shops are guarded by the people Matty saw last night in the gas masks and fur hats.

ZEE: THE PROBLEM IS **RESPECT**.

ZEE: YOU CAN'T JUST **WALTZ IN** AND START TAKING PICTURES OF WHATEVER YOU SEE! NOBODY KNOWS YOU HERE!

MATTY: HOLD ON – "WALTZ IN"? THOSE FUCKERS **SHOT ME DOWN** LAST NIGHT! YOUR **NEIGHBORS**!

Panel 3

They turn a corner onto a wider street and continue hurrying along.

ZEE: YEAH, WELL, TROOPS LANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT DON'T EXACTLY FEEL **FRIENDLY** TO THOSE OF US WHO LIVE HERE, YA KNOW?

ZEE: WE'RE NOT INSURGENTS, NOT WITH THE FREE ARMY, TERRORISTS, ANY OF THAT SHIT. WE JUST **LIVE HERE**. IF WE HAVE GUNS, IT'S TO KEEP OUR HOMES SAFE FROM LOOTERS AND PSYCHOPATHS AND **FUCKING ATTACK HELICOPTERS!**

MATTY: I DIDN'T-- LOOK, I'M NOT **WITH** THE MILITARY! WE WERE COMING IN TO DO NEWS STORIES, NOT ATTACK ANYONE!

Panel 4

The Zee continues her speech.

ZEE: A FUCKING **NEWS CREW?** WELL, WE DIDN'T **ASK** FOR A NEWS CREW. WE DON'T WANT TO GET ALL CAUGHT UP IN YOUR SHIT. LIKE I SAID, WE JUST LIVE HERE.

MATTY: I KNOW, BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND—

Panel 5

She stops suddenly, gets right up into Matty's face.

ZEE: **WHAT?** I DON'T UNDERSTAND? ***I*** DON'T UNDERSTAND?

ZEE: **TELL ME** WHAT **I** DON'T UNDERSTAND!

Panel 6

Matty is stunned, having a hard time putting his thoughts together. He's never heard this sort of argument before.

MATTY: YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WE'RE …TOLD OVER THERE. I DIDN'T KNOW SO MANY CIVILIANS STILL LIVED HERE… ALL WE HEAR ABOUT ARE INSURGENTS AND STUFF…

ZEE: THAT FIGURES. IGNORANCE WINS **EVERY TIME**. THAT'S WHY YOUR STUPID FUCKING WAR WILL **NEVER END**.

Panel 7

They continue walking again. Matty is pretty humbled at being told off so effectively.

ZEE: LOOK, LET'S JUST GET YOU TO YOUR FRIENDS. WHAT TIME ARE YOU MEETING THEM?

MATTY: RIGHT AWAY, I GUESS THEY SAID THEY WERE COMING TO SECURE THE CRASH SITE AND PICK ME UP.

Panel 8

She stops suddenly, grabs him again.

ZEE: **WHAT?** THEY **SAID** THAT? "SECURE THE CRASH SITE"?

MATTY: YEAH. SO? I GUESS THEY WANNA RECOVER WHAT THEY CAN, EQUIPMENT AND STUFF.

Page 20

Panel 1

She turns and starts running back the way they came.

MATTY: WHERE ARE YOU **GOING?**

ZEE: THAT'S **NOT** WHAT "SECURING" MEANS, YOU **IDIOT!**

Panel 3

Suddenly, overhead and very low, come two very lethal looking attack helicopters. Matty looks up at them.

MATTY: OH, SHIT!

SFX: ***WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP***

Panels 4-5

He runs after the Zee, and catches her just as she reaches the corner they turned earlier.

He grabs her and holds her there. In the distance, a couple blocks away, is the crash site, with the teenagers playing all over the wreckage.

MATTY: HEY, HOLD ON, YOU GOTTA **STOP!**

MATTY: **YOU CAN'T STOP THEM!**

ZEE: ***LET. ME. GO!***

SFX: ***WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP***

Panel 6

They crouch there, half-shielded by the corner the edge of the building, and watch as the attack helicopters open up on the downed Black Hawk with all the weapons they have: gatling guns and small missiles. The entire block is affected, the streets and buildings.

SFX: ***BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM***

SFX: ***RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT***

Page 21

Panel 1

The helicopters abruptly peel off and head away. A few of the gas mask crazies have appeared are returning fire with their AK-47's, but with little to no effect.

Bodies are all over the street. The Black Hawk is little more than rubble now.

Panel 2

Cut back to Matty and the Zee, who are grabbing a hold of each other for safety, heads tucked down.

MATTY: **FUCK!** WHAT THE **HELL** WAS **THAT** FOR?

MATTY: LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

Panel 3

With her face hidden in his neck, she replies.

ZEE: STAY DOWN.

ZEE: IT'S NOT OVER YET.

Panel 4

Cut to a stealth fighter miles above the city, cruising through the clouds. This can be a small panel.

Panel 5

Move right up close into the cockpit, the pilot in helmet and goggles and facemask and American flag on his shoulder. He has a gloved hand on the control stick and his thumb is pressed down on a button on the stick.

PILOT: COPY THAT. PACKAGE AWAY.

Panel 6

Back to a shot of Matty and the Zee huddled together. A brief moment of silence.

Then:

Page 22

Panel 1

The entire block goes up in a massive explosion, two blocks away from them, the building in front of the crash site, the building with the Zee's clinic, where Matty spent the night. Retribution.

The entire block is decimated right in front of their eyes.

SFX: ***BAWHOOOOOM!!***

This panel should be huge, about ¾ of the page.

Panel 2

Matty and the Zee stay huddled together. Smoke and white dust roll around them, debris is landing everywhere. Should be reminiscent of the dust and debris clouds we saw on 9/11.

MATTY: WHAT… WHAT WAS--?

MATTY: ARE YOU OKAY?

Panel 3

Close up on Matty. The cellphone in his pocket is ringing.

SFX: ***BEEP BEEP BE-BEEP!***

Page 23

Panel 1

They break their huddle a little bit, pull back to look at each other. Their faces are caked with dust, and the Zee has visible rivers of tears streaming down hers.

ZEE: YOU PEOPLE DON'T KNOW **SHIT** ABOUT US. YOU PUNISH **US** FOR YOUR OWN FUCK-UPS.

ZEE: **WE JUST LIVE HERE!** WHY CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?

Matty just stares at her, stunned. He can't believe what happened.

SFX: ***BEEP BEEP BE-BEEP!***

Panel 2

He opens the phone and is immediately assaulted by that same voice as earlier.

VOICE: **MATTHEW ROTH?** WHERE ARE YOU? WE'VE SECURED THE CRASH SITE, AND ARE AT THE EXTRACTION POINT.

VOICE: TIME TO GO HOME, MATTHEW! REPEAT: **WE'RE HERE TO TAKE YOU HOME!**

Panel 3

The cellphone is lying in the dirt, as if its been dropped.

VOICE: WHERE ARE YOU? GIVE US YOUR LOCATION!

VOICE: MATTHEW?

VOICE: MATTHEW ROTH? ARE YOU THERE?

Panel 4

Matty and the Zee gingerly walk back towards the crash site, to her home, to the massive smoking hole in the city where her building once was.

They're supporting each other as they walk. We are looking at them from behind, as they walk towards the disaster in the background.

This final panel should be large and leave enough space near the bottom to incorporate the following text and credits:

END PART ONE.

DMZ #1 – ON THE GROUND, Part 1.
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etc

-bri
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